

The Coalition of Carers in Scotland

Annual General Meeting

Minutes 25th November 2015

1. Welcome and Introductions, Donald Macleod, Convener

Donald opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and explained the theme for the day.

He then introduced the Cabinet Secretary.

2. Cabinet Secretary, Shona Robison

The Cabinet Secretary said she welcomed the work the Coalition do to promote the voice of carers, as it helps the decision makers get things right. Carers are partners in care and must be equal partners around the table.

She talked about the progress of the Carers Bill and its intention to make a difference for carers.

She recognised that there are some terrible examples where carers have not been listened to, but that Integration should address some of these issues. For example, it is important to get people out of hospital, step up down care can help people prepare for going home and ensure they have adaptations made.

The National Conversation about the future of health and care is more than just a 5 year vision, it will help to develop a 15 to 20 year plan. The conversations needed to be with the public and patients as well as practitioners.

There are challenges regarding demographics and health inequality. We need to generate discussion on how we deliver better services for people – including carers.

There are two parts to the Healthier Scotland conversation. The first part is gathering information, the second part is consulting on solutions.

One area we need to look at is primary care – this is ripe for massive change. We all rely on GPs, but it can be hard to access in and out of hours care and people end up hospital.

We need to look at all assets – health professionals and the voluntary sector, people with expertise don't work together as they could. A new model would bring together assets of the community, so when someone needs support it will be the right support, such as a community pharmacist, the voluntary sector, physiotherapy, patient experts. The right person is not always a doctor.

GPs up for this. We need agreement that this may be the way forward. This is one key focus of the conversation.

The benefit to carers could be quite profound – same day access to the person you need, meeting the needs of carers in the community.

There is also The Carers Bill which Jamie Hepburn is leading on. We are continuing to improve the Bill, listening to the National Carer Organisations and others, leading to a number of changes and amendments.

The First Minister has confirmed that when we get our hands on Carers Allowance we will make changes and raise it to the same level as Jobseekers Allowance.

Finally, caring responsibilities are beginning to increase and many carers are ageing. I want to know support is there when we need it. I see with my constituency work where it doesn't work. Sometimes it's small things, like attitudes. The national conversation provides an opportunity to give views on a wider landscape.

3. Question and Answer Session

Donald McLeod: We need to link things up – education, housing, health. How do you see that happening?

Shona Robison: We really need that to happen. For example, housing is now part of Integration Boards. This is important as often the barrier for people getting home is needing adaptations to their home.

In relation to education and employers, there is important work we are doing in relation to carers. It is important to have the right responses there because people's needs are different and they change

Rosemary Kennedy, Carer, Glasgow – For carers, how well they are supported by health and social care services will be partly dependent on how successful the Carers Bill is in delivering them new rights.

There are concerns that there aren't enough resources going with the Bill, particularly in Year 1. It is also unclear if there will be any additional money for local authorities to replace the estimated £16million loss of income, where they will no longer be able to charge for replacement care.

We welcome these new rights for carers, but need assurances that they won't fail because of lack of funding

Shona Robison: Regarding the £16million of replacement care – This figure was discussed with Local Authorities and COSLA. This is against a backdrop of challenging finances. We need to prioritise what is important. In addition to resources going with the Carers Bill, Joint Boards are getting £500 million a year in relation to making changes. All of our resources depend on the consequential from the budget set by Westminster

It is important that through integration we make the best use of every pound, whether it is from health or social care. We need to spend it more wisely. Although focusing on the millions going with the Carers Bill is important – we also have to look at how the billions spent on health and social care funding support carers more. When commissioners are deciding how they spend their money – carers need to be around that table.

Sean Harkin, North Lanarkshire Carers Together – Health and social care services rely on the contribution of unpaid carers who provide more care than health and care professionals combined.

In this conversation, will you be giving equal consideration to the contribution carers make in comparison to the contribution care professionals make? And will you be looking at how we sustain the caring population and protect their health and wellbeing in the same way the workforce is protected by employment legislation?

Shona Robison – Yes, without the input of unpaid carers statutory services would be overwhelmed with demand. This has been recognised for many years and why we have a Carers Bill. Since the Scottish Parliament has come in we have seen many changes, there are lots of advocates in parliament for carers. Their contribution has been recognised in a way it wasn't 20 years ago. What that means in reality needs to be monitored. We need to look at how carers and service users have been heard in relation to partnerships. Some of the best service developments come from those conversations.

One of best examples is the partnership with the Red Cross in supporting people going home from hospital. They arrange transport, make sure the heating is on, that there is something in the fridge etc.

Chrisopher Shep - Carer representative, East Dunbartonshire –Once the government has full fiscal power – will you pay Carers Allowance once someone reaches retirement age?

Shona Robison – I'm not sure. We haven't looked at eligibility criteria. I know it has been a thorny issue and we will need to look at this. We are looking at our manifesto at the moment – what needs to be the priority. With welfare powers we want to make positive changes. We want to make them make a difference- otherwise it is just administration. We need to turn it on its head and look at what people can do. We will take this away and consider it

4. Interactive session

Participants shared their views on a Healthier Scotland via message boards. A full report of the session was submitted to the healthier Scotland oversight group. A copy of the report is available on request at coalition@carersnet.org

5. Annual General Meeting

Chairperson's report

A correction was made to the Annual Report, the Convener is Ann Anderson, not Ann Henderson

Thanks were given to Alan Scougal and Terry Welsh who were standing down from the Committee. Best wishes were also given to Tony Fitzpatrick.

The rest of the committee were thanked for their ongoing support, Claire Cairns was thanked as the only worker.

Treasurer's report

Seb Fischer circulated a financial summary, copies of the audited accounts were also made available. The finance report was endorsed unanimously.

Election of Executive Committee members

There was a unanimous agreement to vote on all those standing for the committee. The committee members voted on are:

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| Bill Addies | A carer and Vice Chairperson of South Lanarkshire Carers Network |
| Ann Anderson | A former carer from Edinburgh and member of the Board of VOCAL – Voice of Carers Across Lothian |
| James Bell | A carer from Dunoon on the Management Committee of Crossroads Cowal and Bute |
| Sebastian Fischer | Chief Executive of VOCAL – Voice of Carers Across Lothian |
| Tony Fitzpatrick | A carer from Lanarkshire |
| Lynn Gallacher | Operations Manager, Borders Carers Centre |
| Lucinda Godfrey | Manager, Dundee Carers Centre |
| Alan Gow. | A carer from Glasgow and Chair of CAST Carers |
| May Kirkwood | Manager, Stirling Carers Centre |
| Donald MacLeod | Donald is a carer from the Highlands and is on the Board of Highland Community Care Forum |
| Suzanne Munday | Manager of MECOPP, Minority Ethnic Carers Project |
| Dr Emma Miller | Emma is a senior researcher at Strathclyde University specialising in person centred engagement |
| Catherine Paterson | A carer from Argyll and Bute and founder of the Dochas Foundation |

Joanna McPherson

Joanna is a project manager for Aberdeenshire young carers service and is also a carer

Any Other Competent Business

There was no further business.

Questions and Answers

There were no questions from the membership.

6. Update on The Carers (Scotland) Bill

Claire Cairns gave an update on the progress of the Bill, currently at Stage 2 of the parliamentary process.

7. Question and Answer Session

Question: Emergency planning is a good idea, but how will it work? Who will do it and resource it, what happens if a carer doesn't meet eligibility, but a crisis requires intervention by statutory services? It is not always possible to have friends and family step in, it is just passing responsibility on to them.

Answer (Claire): Emergency Planning will be part of the Information and Advice service, so a carer does not need to meet eligibility criteria to get this service and it will need to be part of the contract with the organisation providing information and advice. The costs of emergency planning are not included in the Financial Memorandum, which is a concern. There are many good examples of emergency planning, friends and family stepping in, but this is not always possible. We need to ensure emergency planning means swift action. You make a good point and we need to pin this down in regulations and guidance. Enable is very involved in this aspect of the Bill and has experience through their emergency planning project. We will also feed this view in.

Question: I am a multiple carer, with no social work support. I am exhausted, the only break I have got is through the Time to Live fund, organised by the carers centre in Pollok. This was one night in hotel. Would I meet eligibility? how will the carers bill help carers like me?

Answer (Claire): This will be a measure of whether the carers bill has worked or not- will it help carers like you and will eligibility take into account someone with multiple caring roles? We will be advocating that it should.

If carers reach eligibility, they will be able to determine their own support. This is where the Bill needs to make a difference, for carers who can't access the right support. It gives them the choice to do something different, like a night away to catch up on sleep. We hope this is where it will have impact, but again much rests on the eligibility criteria

Question: What can carers do to help make sure the Bill works. I don't think a march or traditional action would work, social media seems to be the thing.

Answer (Claire Cairns and Fiona Collie): We will provide tools for this. It is important for carers to be active in this, particularly around seeking an amendment for national eligibility criteria. All MSPs can take part in the Stage 3 debate and voting, It is key to get local MSPs involved and make your views known.

Question/Comment: The Bill is not strong enough. We have had small concessions, but it really needs something on short breaks and for eligibility to be national, not local.

Answer (Claire): We have had some major wins, a resolution on waiving charges for carers, emergency planning and the addition of hospital discharge. There are still some big ones. I agree short breaks need to be strengthened and there are amendments being sought around the definition of short breaks and ensuring there is a wide range of short break opportunities. But the Bill does need to be stronger – eligibility criteria is what the rights in the bill hang off – this needs to be our main focus.

Fiona Collie: I agreed, short breaks and eligibility are key. The importance of the carers voice must be recognised. It was the same with the waiving charges campaign. Where campaigning by carers was listened to.

8. Final remarks and close of meeting